THE

PRIMITIVE CHURCH

(OR BAPTIST)

MAGAZINE.

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Essays, Expositions, &c.

A WORD TO OUR READERS.

We avail ourselves of the opportunity afforded by the close of another year's labours, of addressing our readers on the position and prospects of the Magazine in which they, in common with ourselves, are deeply interested.

The "Primitive Church Magazine" has now completed the twenty-second year of its existence, and we trust it is not too much to say that, from the very commencement of its publication even until now, its one constant aim has been to "declare the whole counsel of God," and especially to maintain, firmly and consistently, the principles embodied in our Scriptural motto of "One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism."

Whilst readily acknowledging the merits and excellencies of many of our denominational periodicals, yet the fact that they are for the most part *pledged* to "neutrality" on the subject of communion at the table of the Lord, and other kindred topics, proves the necessity for such a publication as our own, which, fettered by no such pledges, is designed to maintain the "truth as it is in Jesus," and to open its columns to the full and fair advocacy of those principles which in the judgment of not a few among us are of grave importance as affecting the very law of the New Testament in regard to the order and constitution of the churches of Christ.

If, in maintaining the views we conscientiously hold, we are compelled at times to assume an *apparently* hostile attitude towards brethren whom we yet "esteem very highly in love," we regret it, *but we cannot help it*. Truth must on no account be sacrificed, even to charity itself—nay, that is altogether a false charity which, for the sake of maintaining it, would consent to any concealment, or to any compromise, where truth, the truth of God, is concerned.

And, unless we are greatly mistaken, the necessity for our contending "earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints," and of counselling a closer adherence to apostolic doctrine and practice, is as urgent now as at any former period in our denominational history.

We perceive with deep regret the disposition evinced by many of our brethren (some of whom occupy prominent positions in the Baptist body) to cry out against "denominationalism," and to contend, as they appear to be doing, for the amalgamation, or *absorption* (which is it?) of the Baptist body into some other section of the Christian church. Now this is a "sign of the times" which it behoves every true Baptist carefully to discern.

We have no fear for the *truth* itself, for that must and will stand, in spite of all opposition. Nor do we at all despair as to the *future* of the *Baptist* body. We do not believe that the "denomination" will become extinct as yet, though, judging from appearances, this seems with some to be a "consummation devoutly to be wished."

If we have any fear, it is lest *we* who profess to hold the truth should be found recreant to our principles, and unfaithful to our trust; lest through coldness and indifference on the one hand, or through the influence of a worldly policy on the other, we should be tempted to forsake the old paths, and range ourselves on the side of the most popular or the most influential. God forbid that it should be so with us, but may we reverently listen to his own solemn exhortation, "Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." It is to the advocacy of these principles, which as *baptized* believers we hold most dear, that the pages of this Magazine are for the most part devoted. It is in no factious spirit that we take our stand here. We yield to none in our desire to promote *real*, hearty, union among all the churches of the saints, but we are deeply convinced that in carrying out this object, it is neither desirable nor necessary that there should be the slightest sacrifice of principle, or that we should swerve from our solemn purpose to adhere as closely as possible to the doctrines and ordinances of the gospel—as they have been delivered to us.

But may we not justly appeal to *our readers* especially, to give us, in our humble endeavours to uphold the truth, not merely their good wishes, but their active and constant support? By rendering such aid as it is in their power to afford, our Magazine may reach a much higher standard in point of ability than it has ever yet attained, and by a greatly enlarged circulation, be made, under the Divine blessing, a means of more extensive influence and usefulness. We earnestly commend this matter to the prayerful attention of all our friends. If we are satisfied as to the truth of the principles we hold, we cannot be too earnest or zealous in seeking their diffusion. And if our Magazine be regarded as an organ necessary to the discussion and advocacy of these principles, then it becomes a duty incumbent upon all who share in such a conviction to do all in their power to recommend it to their friends and increase its circulation.

If our readers will all set themselves to work during this month, we believe there would be little difficulty in *doubling* the circulation in the coming year.

For our own part, we will spare no pains to make the Magazine both edifying and attractive, while we hope never to lose sight of the great principles which, as Baptists, we are called to maintain. The brethren who have helped us with contributions from their pens, merit and shall receive our warmest thanks, and we trust that a still larger number of our gifted brethren will, in like manner, help us in the future. The kindly remarks of a correspondent in our November number (see page 252), suggest also another way in which the Magazine may be rendered more interesting to the general reader. We should be glad to be enabled to carry out our correspondent's recommendation, by inserting *brief*

reports of baptisms, accounts of special meetings, &c. But it will be at once obvious to our readers that not even the most clever or efficient editors can possibly *manufacture* reports, and, therefore, if intelligence does not *reach* them, they cannot insert it. We would therefore urge upon the pastors and deacons of our churches kindly to assist us in this matter, and either engage themselves, or select some other *competent* person, whose work from time to time shall be to furnish such items of intelligence as may be deemed of interest to the religious public.

We have thought it good thus to address our readers, in addition to the usual "Preface," because the matters of which we have so briefly treated are of great importance, and because it will tend greatly to encourage us, and tend also, we hope, to promote the cause of God and truth, if they will come forward and do their best in helping to extend the circulation of a sound, healthy Baptist literature. Let us all bear in mind the words of our Lord and Master, "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much."

J. H.
E. P.

RELIGIOUS DECLENSION.

No. II.—The Causes.

Decay is never sudden. Declension in spiritual life, as in everything else, may originate in small things. The law is all but universal, both in progress and decay. The mightiest rivers originate in smallest springs. The decay of some patriarch of the forest may arise from the puncture of an insect. In religious life, it may, we think, always be traced to one cause. Many, generally, contribute to its development, and augment its rapid progress. At first it may be slow, and almost imperceptible; known to the individual, but only here and there discerned by the intelligent of a community. But its progress becomes rapid. As any holy principle is weakened, as any religious duty is neglected, or, if discharged, only as a mere form, the power of evil is increased, and, like the river, as it receives one tributary stream after another, the channel deepens, and the current becomes broader and stronger. True it is, the cause is not alike in all cases. A variety of influences may modify, in a given instance, the power of one element, and in another individual it may operate without any check. Hence in tracing the decay which exists, we cannot say, that the cause we may indicate operates alike in all cases, either of churches or in that of individuals. In some we may mark the sign of the whole, in others only one, working out the results which we all of us must deplore. I will only add one sentence to this preliminary paragraph. I shall not in this paper attempt to sketch all those sources of evil which are weakening the piety and lessening the moral power of the Church of God, but only those which appear to my own mind to be most common and deadly in their results.

No one familiar with the teaching of the New Testament need be told how distinctly and with what emphasis the disciple of Jesus is warned against the world. One great end of the Saviour's sacrificial life and death was *to deliver us from the present evil world.* "*The friendship of the world is enmity with God.*" The noblest, the highest victory of faith, is to overcome. Not to resist it—not to defend ourselves against it; but to conquer it, and use it as our servant—to make it subserve the high and holy purpose of spiritual life. Resistance is one thing, victory another. To repel a foe is a small thing, to subdue him is to annihilate his power of resistance. So with the world; it must be used—not abused; associated with not as our master, not as an equal or a friend, but as the servant to do our behests, and to execute our pleasure.

That this is the teaching of the Divine Word, will scarcely be denied by an intelligent Christian. Upon whatever other moral principle we may differ, upon this our agreement must be entire. We cannot serve two masters.

But is this freedom from the world's influence realised by the church? Or do we see it unfolded in the character of the individual disciple? I will narrow the circle of inquiry. I will lower the standard to which we should conform. *Is the spirit of the age ever repelled with vigour, and perseveringly?* Test the whole church. Apply it to any professing disciple in the circle over which your observation extends. I will throw it into various forms for you. Are we using the holy weapons of our warfare in resisting its power and throwing off its yoke. Do we see its weakened influence in the growing simplicity and purity of our worship; in the manifest nonconformity of our social habits to the fashions and follies of the avowedly ungodly; in the lofty spirituality of our minds, and in the absorbing influence of the unseen upon us? Are the sources of our pleasures, the scenes to which we frequently resort, to waste our time and gratify the purely sensuous of our nature, such as the Saviour or inspired men would dignify with their presence? Do we see this in the magnitude of our sacrifice for the cause of Christ and our daily acts of self-denial? Do we—but it is enough. I need not reply. The spirit of the world meets you everywhere. In the pulpit and in the pew, in the church and in the family, the impress of its hideous form is seen, lowering the tone of our devotions, weakening the power of our piety, and withering the vigour and earnestness of our spiritual life. It is like the hot wind as it sweeps over the desert, everything touched by it is scorched and blasted, if not entirely destroyed. No great amount of prosperity can be realised till this spirit is cast out. Nothing is more antagonistic to the spirit of Christ. At the widest possible extremes they stand. As the influence of the one extends, the other is narrowed. Both can never harmonise. Union can never exist. He who knoweth all things has said, "*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*" And this spirit of the world "goeth not out but by prayer and fasting."

The *Church of Christ should be holy.* Composed, and in reality it is so in the eyes of the great head of His body the church, of saints the holy ones. None but such can make a part of the holy family. But the maintenance and growth of the spiritual temple depends on two things. No one can overrate the importance of the simple, the full, the faithful ministration of the great verities of the gospel, as a potent element of sanctity. They are "for the perfecting of the saints," "for the edifying of the body of Christ." The church's history in all ages places the fact before us of an indissoluble union between a holy life—church life, as called by some—and a clear and full unfolding of the whole counsel of God. The truth is placed beyond all doubt that departure from doctrinal teaching has always been followed by decline in the spiritual life. From all ages—from all countries the evidence would come, that the purity and prosperity of Christ's church depends very, very much on the teaching of a pure and simple gospel. Nor is it less true that the maintenance of Scriptural discipline very largely contributes to this. Both are intimate. They never can exist alone. It is on this latter topic I wish to touch now.

In earlier times the discipline in the churches of our body was very stringent. The fathers and founders of the denomination were intensely anxious about the purity of the church; they felt that its prosperity was inseparable from it. Many things are tolerated now, which would have shocked their sense of moral fitness, and would have called forth all their efforts to repress them. In some of the old church-books which I have inspected, as Devonshire Square, Maze Pond, and others, such items as attending the State Church, neglecting religious ordinances, abstinence from the Lord's table, speaking disparagingly of the church and the pastor, embracing doctrines different from those professed by the church, backbiting or quarrelling,

were matters of discipline, whilst the grosser immoralities were everywhere followed by the solemn and unmistakable expression of the church's disapprobation. Nor was this all. The manner of exercising their discipline indicated that it was not a matter of trifling moment. They sought at the same time to express their abhorrence of the sin and to reclaim the sinner. Hence these acts were frequently preceded by seasons of fasting and prayer—by earlier and protracted investigations of the charges. Everything indicated their intense solicitude to act in harmony with the Master's law, and as in his sight. The church in their estimation was a holy family, a spiritual brotherhood. And as in a family, the peace and prosperity of the whole depended on the constant and unanimous working of the whole of its members, neglect of appropriate duties in any case would be an injury and a sin. So in the church, inconsistencies would weaken its unity, disturb its concord, impair its purity, and lessen its means for the accomplishment of its high and holy purpose.

True it is, some of your readers may think that, granting the sincerity and holy motives of these men, they in many cases manifested zeal, but not according to knowledge. Be it so. To err is human. But is not zeal for the purity of the Church of God, better than indifference to it? If this was too rigid, is not ours awfully lax? If they descended to trifles, are we not in very, very many cases tolerating evils which are corrupting the core of individual piety, and withering the energies of the church? In how many cases are individuals retained in the fellowship of the church who rarely attend its services. We could tell of numbers—of others whose life indicates the entire absence of all those characteristics which make the Christian; of deacons, retained in office, whose temper and spirit are like the mildew on the grain, blighting the harvest and destroying the hopes of the husbandman; of men of rank, wealth, and this world's influence, tolerated, simply because they are so. But enough. I have no pleasure in detailing them. Only necessity compels me. I state them as one of the great sources of our feebleness. It lies like a worm at the root or the core of our spiritual vitality. Its working is hidden, but the beauty and bloom will speedily perish from it. The laws of Christ's house are as important as the material of which it is composed. Nothing enjoined by him can be neglected with impunity. We cannot trifle without loss. Nay more, the nearer, as individuals, and communities, we are conformed to the mind of our exalted Master, not in outline only, but in the filling up of the portrait, the more shall we enjoy his presence and tell upon the world around us. The lights of the world, must not only have the oil of grace, pure and plenteous, but the medium through which that light is diffused must be translucent as the cloudless sky, if men are to behold our good works. A pure church is the noblest, the richest, the most glorious display of the power, the love, and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Brethren, let us aim at it.

At no time in our past history, nor indeed in that of the Christian Church in this nation, was the ministry more numerous, more cultivated, and so high in social character and position, as at the present. This is true of them as a class. Rapid as the advancement of society has been within the last half-century, ministers, as a whole, have kept abreast of it. But admitting all this, and more, the question must now force itself on our attention, "How far has the ministry to do with the apparent feebleness of the Church of Christ?" Calmly, and under the deep sense of the gravity of the question, let us look at it. One thing is admitted on all hands. Upon nothing, under God, does the prosperity of the church depend so much, as the character of our public ministration. It may be impassioned, erudite, marked by all the grace which give a charm to composition, powerful in argument, and logical in its conclusions—but if it is not full of Christ, it is only as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. Perhaps we may form a somewhat proper estimate of its character and tendencies by putting a few questions before our readers.

Is there not a growing tendency in all bodies to regard the ministry as a profession?—to enter it as a means of maintaining a high social position,

rather than from a high and absorbing sense of its responsibilities and unutterable importance? Hence its duties are discharged sincerely, but with all the coldness of a mere professional life.

Is there a want of evangelical truth in the ministry?—marked by what is wanting, rather than positive error?—a tendency, in many, in their way to philosophise—to make plain what no one doubts, and to explain away "those things which are most surely believed amongst us"? Is not the mere moral teacher prominent, rather than the evangelical divine?—more anxiety for the beauty of the composition—the appropriateness of a figure, than the grand realities of the gospel of Jesus Christ?

Is there a want of earnestness in the ministry?—not noise, not bluster and fury, in the pulpit; but deep and irrepressible feeling in the pursuit of the great ends of ministerial life?—a spirit of self-sacrifice, one of quenchless zeal, in season and out of season?—shrinking from no duty, strong in conscious weakness; controlled and impelled by a deathless passion for the conversion of souls and the glory of the Lord?—a spirit which draws from apparent difficulties a stronger motive to repose on Christ, and which will convert the elements of danger into occasions of more vigorous effort?—the earnestness of Paul as he gloried in the cross of Christ; or the deep and fathomless tenderness he cherished for his brethren when he said, "*I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh*"! Does this passion for saving souls mark us?

Are the preparations for the pulpit as careful, thoughtful, and prayerful as they should be? Are they marked by the devout and careful examination of the Divine Word? Do we seek in every way the mind of the Spirit, and go from the closet to the sanctuary burdened with the magnitude of our work? Is the course of our studies and the staple of our reading healthy, and adapted to augment our ministerial fitness? Are we more familiar with the theories and speculations of a Stanley, Kingsley, and Maurice—with the imaginings of Tennyson and Longfellow, than the old masters of theology, the Howes, the Owens, the Taylors, the Baxters, and the Bunyans? These are men who have left their impress on the Church of God, and the circle of whose influence is augmenting.

I offer no opinion. I pass no judgment on these matters. Only filling a limited and somewhat obscure circle, I do not venture to pronounce as to the prevalence of these things in our churches. In some places, and to some extent, I know they exist. Only this I record, that when they exist to any extent, the ministry will suffer, and the prosperity of the church will be thrown back. The more, as ministers, we feel our responsibility—the more we study and unfold the great verities of the gospel, the more we make them gather their interest and power from the glory of the cross; the more we imbue our studies and our ministrations with the spirit of prayer, and the more we give ourselves to our great work, the richer will be the hallowed and hallowing influence of the Saviour in his church. Neglect them, and eloquence, learning, correctness of taste, and philosophic discussions, won't erase from our pulpits and our churches, "THE GLORY HAS DEPARTED."

With profoundest respect we call the attention of our brethren to the utterance of the celebrated Webster. "If the clergy of our day would return to the simplicity of the gospel, and preach more to individuals, and less to the crowd, there would not be so much complaint of the decline of religion. Many of the ministers of the present day, take their texts from Paul, and preach from the newspaper. When they do so, I prefer to enjoy my own thoughts, rather than to listen. I want my pastor to come to me in the spirit of the gospel, saying, 'You are mortal; your probation is brief; your work must be done speedily. You are immortal too; you are hastening to the bar of God; the Judge is standing at the door.'" Brethren, the great American statesman is not alone in

this. Thousands of intelligent men sympathise in this feeling. They want food, not flowers.

Our's is an age of fastness. The ploddings of the past are ignored. Steam performs everything now. The spirit is not feeble or limited in the circle of its influence. It is not confined to the material world. It touches everything. Education, science, religion; all feel it. The lecture-room is a power. Upon all topics men are endeavouring to enlighten the people. They give them knowledge without difficulties, learning without study, and a fulness of information about all things, without any accurate acquaintance with the first principles. Then the press is deluging us with its productions. Its light literature is multifarious. Serials of the most sensational kind, compendiums and epitomes on all branches of science, magazines of every conceivable order, from the farthing trifle for an infant mind, to the pondrous quarto, the embodiment and organ of insolence and bigotry. All profess that their end is the enlightenment of the people in an easy way.

Be it so. We would hail everything with profound satisfaction and unmixed pleasure which would elevate the mind and enrich it with all knowledge. But is there not danger here? Is the tone and staple of the popular lecture—the feeling it excites, the laugh that it creates, and the craving for excitement which it induces and cherishes, favourable to piety and the sober realities of the gospel ministry? Will they have the tendency of inducing men to crowd the sanctuary and hear the Word of God? I simply put these questions. I do not dogmatise upon them. And what judgment shall we form of the overwhelming number of magazines, which are increasing almost every month. The enumeration of their names would probably fill a page or two of the "Primitive." The circulation of some is almost incredible. They meet you everywhere. In the study of the minister, on the table of the deacon, and in the hands of our young men and maidens, they are found. Some are designed to help ministers to make sermons—others to gratify the morbid taste for the novel kind of sensationalism; while a third class aim at a higher standard of moral culture. The withdrawal of some would be a loss, a weakening of our moral power and the means of Christian usefulness; but, viewing them as a whole, what shall we say? Are they healthy? Do they contribute to the growth, the strength and muscle of Christian manhood? Do they interfere with the reading and study of the Sacred Oracles? Do they indispose the minds of our successors in the work of Christ for the perusal of the works of the masters of theology? Do they nourish a feeling in the mind always enervating, and never indicative of a healthy moral nature? Replies to these inquiries we leave with our readers. Opinions will be various. Our own is fixed. In our judgment, they contribute in no small degree to flood the church with the spirit of the world, and to lessen the deep, the earnest spirit, which should animate its membership.

Upon other topics I might touch, but enough has been said to excite inquiry and prayerful searching of heart. Affectionately, but earnestly, I would ask the reader of this imperfect sketch to undertake this task. The responsibility is solemn; it is untransferable. The Master says, "*It must needs be that offences*—occasion for sin—*come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh! Wherefore, if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands, or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire.*" (Matt. xviii. 7, 8.) In another place He says, "*It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him through whom they come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.*" (Luke xvii. 1, 2.) "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

S——, November 3rd, 1865. N. S. H.

CONTENTED CHRISTIANS.

BY THE REV. THEO. L. CUYLER, NEW YORK.

THERE are a hundred successful men where there is one contented man. I can find a score of handsome faces where I can find one happy face—happy in all weather, and radiant with the sunshine of the heart. I can even find a score of working, zealous Christians, where I can encounter a single Christian who, under the o'er-brooding love of God, sits as contented as a robin does on its bough, singing and swinging, without one trouble in its heart, or one discord in its minstrelsy. A downright contented Christian is rare, and all the more attractive for his rarity.

A counterfeit contentment is quite too common. It is the offspring of indolence, ignorance, or indifference—the self-satisfied conceit often of the person whom everybody thinks worse of than he does of himself. When we are commanded to be "content in whatsoever state we are," we are not enjoined to be satisfied with pauperism, or with meagre knowledge, or a contracted influence, or a wretchedly defective piety. Contentment in ignorance is a sin when there is a schoolhouse within reach. Contentment with spiritual fruitlessness is a sin; I have no business to be satisfied with myself if I am leading no souls to Jesus. Contentment with a religious hope is a fearful sin, if that hope be no stronger than a spider's web.

What did Paul mean when he said, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content"? He meant that he was perfectly willing to be just where God placed him, and to do just what God told him, and to suffer just what God laid on him, and to work out, through manifold pains and persecutions, his mighty mission to his race. He knew how to be abased and how to abound—how to be full and how to be hungry. He was not content without work, but content in his work. The young minister who is not happy in preaching Christ to a hundred settlers in a frontier cabin, or to a hundred poor children in a mission-room, is not fit for the pulpit of a metropolitan church. If he is not satisfied to be where God puts him, let him be assured that his Master will soon "promote" him several pegs lower still. Christian contentment is consistent with the highest spiritual aspirations, but not with a single selfish aspiration. Remember that Paul was exclaiming, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God," at the same time that he said, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content."

I would define Christian contentment to be the cheerful acquiescence of the will of God. It does not come from a full purse, or a brown-stone mansion, or a prosperous lot, or exuberant health; it is from within. Its fountain is in the soul. Like faith, it is an attainment, and yet is the gift of God. It is also habitual. He could not be called a contented man who was only happy in a prayer-meeting, or when under a good sermon, or even under extraordinary trials. Contentment does not only hold still under the stroke of death, or the loss of a fortune, but under the annoying taunts of a churl, under the inconvenience of a long walk, a hard seat, a poor dinner, or a crying child. Contentment is happy in a cottage, if it cannot afford a three-story mansion. Contentment eats what is set before it, be it brown bread or white. The true Christian feels so unspeakably rich with what God gives to his soul, and with what God promises him in eternity, that he can afford to wear a coarse coat, and to travel his life-journey on foot, with just such companions as poor human nature can furnish. He wears the herb called heart's-ease in his bosom. He finds a cool spring to drink of in every vale of sorrow; he feasts on a fine prospect from the top of every hill of difficulty up which he clambers. When weary, he sits down under the shadow of the tree of life. When hungry, he takes out a sweet promise from his Bible-wallet. And so, as he trudges along his happy, heavenward way, his faith continually sings the homely song which Bunyan puts into the mouth of his brown-faced boy:—

"I am content with what I have,
Little be it, or much;
And, Lord! contentment still I crave,
Because thou blessest such.

"Fulness to me a burden is,
As I go on pilgrimage;
Here little—but hereafter bliss,
Is best from age to age."

One of the most truly contented expressions I know of was that which fell from the lips of the dying minister. He was asked whether he wished to recover or not. He replied, "Really, my friend, I do not care which. If I die, I shall be with God; if I live, God will be with me." It may be asked by some moaning, murmuring, trouble-tormented professor who reads this brief chapter, "How shall I gain this contented spirit?" We answer by giving a few practical hints.

1. Think a moment of the mischief and the sin of discontent. It is the rust that gnaws away all of life's lustre. Discontent never removes one evil, and it embitters every joy. Discontent kills your happiness, disgraces your religion, offends your loving God. Even when on your cross of trial, it only mingles a bitter cup of vinegar and gall to make your suffering the sharper. Discontent is an ugly child of the devil, begotten in his father's own likeness.

2. Think too how much danger you escape when you escape great prosperity. Gold is often a hardener of the heart. Promotion often dizzies the brain. Wealth has made millions poor for eternity. "Ah, David," said Dr. Johnson to Garrick, when he showed him his superb drawing-rooms, "Ah! David, these are the things that make death-beds terrible." You do not need luxuries. Jacob never slept more sweetly, or had more heavenly dreams, than when he rested on a stone for his pillow.

3. Keep a good conscience. Guilt breeds discontent and remorse. The cheerful apostle said, "This is our rejoicing, even the testimony of our conscience."

4. Get more faith if you would be more contented. Faith sees God in everything; faith loves to let him have his own way. Faith extracts the honey of joy out of every daisy by the wayside It presses the wine of contentment out of every cluster of God's promises. Why should the man who has Christ in possession and heaven in expectation ever wear a wry face?

"Why should the children of a King
Go mourning all their days?"

5. Look on the bright side of your lot. Every cloud of trouble, when seen on the heavenly side, displays a silver lining. Look on the bright side of the Bible. Look more at Jesus. Look more at heaven, and the noontide of glory it revealeth. Prepare for heaven by growth in grace. When you are more sanctified, you will be more satisfied; and you will certainly be a contented Christian when, at the last, you "awaken in Christ's likeness."

Correspondence.

OCCASIONAL COMMUNION WITH STRICT BAPTIST CHURCHES.

To the Editors of the Primitive Church Magazine.

DEAR SIRS,—The practice of Strict Baptist churches with reference to the admission of baptised believers to occasional or "transient" communion at the Lord's table, appears to be *far from uniform*. Some churches limit their communion to members of churches "of the same faith and order,"—that is to members of Strict Baptist Churches. Others *also* admit

baptised members of Open Communion churches, provided that *membership* in such churches is confined to baptised believers. On this plan the members of such churches as that over which Mr. Spurgeon presides are freely admitted. Other churches, again, admit to the Lord's table *all* baptised believers, *as such*, without any reference to their standing in, or connection with, any other Christian church.

Now this diversity of practice appears to be very undesirable, and though it would be too much to expect that all Strict churches should act alike in this matter, yet I should feel obliged if you, or one of your readers, would state *which* of these three plans you or he thinks most Scriptural and proper, and the *grounds* on which that opinion is based.

I am, dear Sirs,
Yours faithfully,
G. P.

London,
November 2nd, 1865.

Page for the Young.

CLARA'S BIRTHDAY.

It was a very lovely morning in May when Clara woke up and remembered that it was her birthday. But this thought, which usually makes children so glad, made Clara feel ready to cry,—it brought so many sad thoughts; for Clara could not run about and enjoy herself as you can. About a year before she had fallen from a swing and hurt herself so much that, ever since she has been obliged to lie in bed, and often suffer much pain. So the return of her birthday did not bring much pleasure to poor little Clara.

There was to be a pic-nic that very day, and all her little friends were going to it, so that she could not hope to see any of them, and her mother was poor, and had to work so hard that she could not be with her much of the day. It was rather a sad prospect, and Clara knew that she would be tempted to be cross and discontented all the lonely day, while the other children were having such a fine time. So she prayed very earnestly, as soon as she woke, that God would make her contented and happy, and not let her have any naughty, murmuring thoughts.

Now I have found by experience that God will answer such prayers, and that there are two ways in which he does it. Sometimes the trial remains, and he gives us strength to bear it; and sometimes he removes the trial by giving us something so pleasant that we forget the pleasures we cannot have. It was in the latter way that he answered Clara's prayer.

I must go back a few days to tell you how this happened. On Monday the children were to meet at the school-room to decide when, where, and how the pic-nic was to be; and, as you may imagine, they were all there at the appointed time, ready to be delighted with whatever their teacher should propose. After it had been decided that they were to meet in the school-room at nine o'clock on Thursday morning, and march in procession to the grove on Prospect Hill, and after committees had been appointed for various important matters, Miss Bertram said: "Do you know of any of your number who cannot go to the pic-nic?"

"Clara Sherwood," responded many voices.

"Yes; poor little Clara will have to lie in bed all day while you are having such a pleasant time. It will be a long, lonely day to her. Now don't you think you would enjoy the day more if you should do something before you go to make her happy?"

"Yes, indeed," answered the children, eagerly, "What can we do?"

"Suppose you see how much you can raise to buy her an interesting story-book, to make the hours pass more pleasantly. Will that do?"

Three dollars were soon raised, and Miss Bertram and Annie Wilson were appointed to select a book, write a note in the name of the school, and take it

to Clara on Thursday morning.

So Clara had just finished her breakfast on the morning of her birthday, when there was a knock at the door, and Miss Bertram and Annie came in. They had time for only a few words, but Clara thought the whole day would be brighter for their kindness in remembering her on such a busy day. The parcels and basket of ferns which they carried she supposed were for the pic-nic, till just as they were going they laid them on her bed, saying that the notes in them would tell her where they came from. "And we will bring you some flowers when we come home," they said; and then they kissed her, and went away before she could half thank them.

With eager fingers, Clara untied the first parcel. There she found a beautiful story book, with pretty pictures, and such a loving note from the school as made the tears come into her eyes with pleasure. She could hardly lay the book down to open the other parcel, which she found contained a box of delicious candies from Annie Wilson's older sister, who was her Sunday-school teacher when she could go out. And here she found another note, speaking words of comfort about Jesus and the home he is preparing for us, where there shall be no more pain or sorrow.

"Oh, how kind everybody is!" Clara exclaimed out loud, although there was no one there to speak to; "and how good God is to make them think of me! I thought this birthday was going to be such a hard day to bear: and now I am almost too happy!"

Then there was the basket, with a few words of love from Miss Bertram. "I cannot bring you any costly gift," the note said; "but these little wild flowers and ferns will remind you of the woods. You see they are growing, so they will last all summer, if you water them every day. The moss especially needs to be kept quite wet."

Clara thought no beautiful greenhouse flowers could have given her half the pleasure that these woodland plants did. There were delicate little ferns of various kinds, some just peeping above the moss, with the funny little curled-up stems, and some wide-open, but all small. Then there were blue violets and white saxifrage just ready to open, and, in the spaces between, soft moss of different kinds. Besides these, there were some beautiful thick leaves, like waxwork—green and white on the upper side and purple below, which the note said were called Zebra plant. They were growing in a tin dish just the size of a basket; and here and there through it all grew a few blades of grass or delicate weeds, making it look more wild, and like a little piece of the woods.

Clara was still examining the basket when she heard the bell ring for the children to assemble, and to her surprise found that it was more than an hour since Miss Bertram was there. "If all the day passed as quickly," she thought, "I shall scarcely have time to begin my book." And indeed she did not have much time all that morning, for she wanted first to write a note thanking the children; and this took a very long time, for she was not strong enough to write fast.

When it was finished she was so tired that she lay back upon her pillow, not attempting even to read, but only looking at her treasures; and so she fell fast asleep, to dream of lovely things, till her mother found a little time to sit down by her bed, and hear her notes, and look at the ferns in the pictures in her book, and taste the delicious candy.

What a short, happy day that was in Clara's room, and what a happy day it was on Prospect Hill, where the children sang and played, and had dinner on the rocks at the very top of a hill, and made wreathes for Miss Bertram and each other till they were tired out and ready to go home. Each child was happier for the thought that they had done something to make the day pleasant to their playmate who could not be with them.

When Clara's mother came to give her a good-night kiss, the little girl said: "Oh, mamma, how good God has been to me! I asked Him this morning to make me patient and submissive, and he gave me so many pleasant things that I didn't need to be patient and submissive, but only

glad and thankful."

And now, dear children, I know you don't like to read a lesson at the end of a story, but this will be very short, and I want you to learn and practice it:—

Be kind to those who do not have the pleasure you enjoy. If you know any of your little friends who are poor or sick, or cannot go to the pic-nic or party you are going to, think if you cannot do something to make them as happy as you expect to be. "Whatever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."—*Canadian Paper.*

Reviews.

Important Publications by the Religious Tract Society, 56, Paternoster-row, London, E.C.

1. *Handbook of the English Tongue.* For the use of students and others. By Joseph Angus, M.A., D.D. Cloth. Pp. 504.
2. *The Handbook of English Literature.* By the same Author. Cloth. Pp. 647.
3. *Lyra Americana:* Hymns of Praise and Faith, from American Poets. Cloth. Gilt edges. Pp. 184.
4. *The Band of Christian Graces.* By the Rev. J. P. Thompson, D.D., of New York With an Introduction, by the Rev. J. H. T. Titcomb, M.A., Incumbent of St. Stephen's, South Lambeth.

We are thankful to have the opportunity of saying a few kind words on behalf of our old friend the Religious Tract Society. Cordial attachment to the principles and operations of the Baptist Tract Society does not with us imply opposition or even indifference to the claims of the older and more wealthy organisation. We deeply revere and fervently love the Religious Tract Society, and trust that it may live long, and gather strength year by year. One thing which entitles it to the support of all Evangelical Protestants is its cordial and persistent attachment to the great truths for which the Reformers bled, and which are held in common by all evangelical Christians. Its spirit is thoroughly catholic. This is seen in the composition of its working staff, some of whom are well-known Baptists. It is also manifested in the authors employed by it to produce the various noble works which from time to time proceed from its presses. Our excellent friend, Dr. Angus, has had the honour of adding several valuable books to its literary catalogue. No other organisation in existence could have brought out such an array of precious volumes, because no other could command the talent and resources necessary to their production. Clearly the Religious Tract Society is a positive necessity to the age, and is doing a most invaluable work, which otherwise would be undone.

But the very catholicity of the Religious Tract Society, which is its chief crown of glory, is the reason which has necessitated the organisation of our Baptist Tract Society. The Baptist Tract Society is intended not to supersede the older institution, but to produce tracts on doctrines and ordinances on which the latter is properly pledged to silence. Thus in most of our tract distribution operations our churches use the tracts of both societies. They must do so of necessity, as the loan and exchange system, where several districts have to be supplied, requires an immense number of *different* tracts. From our heart of hearts then we say, God bless the Religious Tract Society! and, God bless the Baptist Tract Society too! They are not enemies, but friends and fellow-workers in the service of Jesus.

Of Dr. Angus's Handbook of the English Tongue it is impossible to speak too highly. It is in advance of every other work of the kind before published. The thorough mastering of its contents would be sufficient to enable any intelligent person to write

and speak the English Tongue with clearness, propriety, and force. The history of the language is given in a peculiarly interesting style. Its characteristics are analysed with great logical skill. Its Orthography, and Orthoëpy; its Etymology, Syntax, Punctuation, and Prosody, are also fully anatomised. But the Hints on Composition are the gem of the whole work, and must prove of invaluable service to all public speakers and writers, whether secular or sacred. We have only space for one brief extract:—

"Some writers, for example, think that they are never clear unless they describe minutely every part of a subject and indicate every step of an argument. Nothing is left to the imagination or thought of the reader. Such a style commits the same mistake as a map-maker who inserts all the villages and streams of a country, instead of contenting himself with the principal towns and rivers. The effect is, that the smaller places cannot be discovered without a glass, while by their presence on the map what would otherwise be clear is completely concealed." (P. 387.)

Dr. Angus's Handbook of English Literature is a companion volume in every respect worthy of the former. For breadth of reading, for fulness of information, for correctness of criticism, and for felicity of style, it is fully up to the author's best previous efforts, and this is no mean praise. The Handbook of the English *Tongue* describes the mechanism of the mighty organ which has been played upon by our greatest minds for many centuries:—the Handbook of English *Literature* is an analysis of the sweet music which they have elicited from this noble instrument. Commencing with the Anglo-Saxon age, it brings us down to the days of Victoria and Tennyson. The method of division, which gives complete and independent histories of Poetry, the Drama, Prose, and the Novel, instead of presenting the whole literature of each age in one view, has its disadvantages, but it has more than counterbalancing advantages. Each species of composition is thus traced from its earliest days to the present, and the mind is enabled vividly to apprehend the growth of the national intellect in that particular direction. Besides, "the whole may be read in centuries, reigns, or literary periods, at the option of the student." The Reviewer in the *Nonconformist*, it appears to us, unduly magnifies the disadvantages of the method of division adopted by Dr. Angus. It would be strange indeed if a work which travels over such an immense range did not contain here and there a slight inaccuracy; but the work remains a noble monument of the erudition, the critical and logical skill, the literary taste, the high moral tone, and the marvellous industry of the revered author. The criticisms upon *the moral tendency* of many of the works described are new and valuable. Too often talent and genius have been employed to palliate sin. Byron is the eulogist of lawless lust, and Robert Burns is the high-priest of drunkenness; notwithstanding the splendour and fascination of their genius. We are glad that Dr. Angus has given us in the most important cases an honest protest against the evil tendency of the writings of some of our most gifted authors. If he has erred here it has not been on the side of *severity*. We thank him most cordially for both books, and earnestly commend them to our readers. They would make a capital Christmas present for ministers and students who do not possess them. Each book is furnished with a copious Index, by which any passage can be found at a minute's notice.

Lyra Americana is a collection of the best Hymns of Praise and Faith produced by our American brethren. It contains many sweet gems that cannot fail to stir the pious soul to devotional fervour. The selection has been made with great literary discrimination and skill. While many hymns which are well known in this country are included, the greater number will be new to the majority of English readers. Not one is inserted which sinks below the level of a respectable poetic merit, while many of them are exquisitely beautiful. The book will make an admirable companion for the closet or the chamber of affliction; for it abounds with

sweet effusions of holy trust in sorrow. The getting up of the volume is very attractive. Altogether it will make a welcome Christmas present for any Christian friend.

The Band of Christian Graces is a deeply interesting and eloquent series of discourses on 2 Peter i. 5—12, by Dr. J. P. Thompson, of New York. The sentiment is evangelical, the illustrations are felicitous, the style is vigorous, and the general effect wondrously fascinating. We commend the book to the thoughtful study of *our young men* especially. A character formed upon the model here given, would be a noble one indeed. We thank the Religious Tract Society for reproducing in this country this fine sample of the efforts of the American pulpit contemporaneously with the "Lyra Americana." England and America are one in their evangelical Protestantism, and every interchange of religious thought between the two peoples must tend to bind them together, and to smooth the ruggedness of diplomatic and political differences. May the God of all ever preserve the most thorough good-will between ourselves and our Transatlantic brethren.

New Works published by Elliot Stock, 62, Paternoster-row, London, E.C.

A Cyclopædia of Illustrations of Moral and Religious Truths, &c. By John Bate. Second Edition. Revised and enlarged. Stout cloth. Pp. 924. This is another capital book, which the student will eagerly welcome to his library. It consists of definitions, metaphors, similies, emblems, contrasts, analogies, statistics, synonyms, anecdotes, &c., &c., culled from the best writers of all ages and countries, in illustration of almost every conceivable topic. The points treated of are arranged alphabetically, so that any desired quotation may be found immediately. The authors who are laid under contribution are 845 in number! The labour expended upon the getting-up of this volume must have been prodigious. It will enable any writer or speaker to "point" a paragraph with a suitable quotation from one of the princes of literature, without any labour of his own. To men who have not much "learned leisure," this facility will be an immense boon. The book too will be valuable for its suggestiveness. It will set the mind of the intelligent reader going in a new line of thought, and will stimulate his own inventive powers. No one should abuse so noble a contribution to our current literature, by making it a substitute for personal research and reflection. The book is remarkably well "got-up." We thank Mr. Bate for furnishing us with such a stepping-stone to literary fulness and power.

Intelligence.

SAXONY.

Dear Sirs,—Being a few days at home, I hasten to give you another report. Looking over the past days since I wrote you last, which was at the end of August, I find I should have to write a long story and trespass upon your time and my own if I would describe or even mention the labours of each day and all the journeys made; I therefore now only extract a few particulars.

In *Leipzig*, famous all over the world for its book-trade and masses, and its University too, you would find the least Christianity; still, the Lord has not left it like Sodom and Gomorrah, but revealed his arm and great grace. Whilst last year about this time we had there only two members, we now have there the number of perfection, seven Baptists; and not only that, for, with the Lord's help, I succeeded to persuade these brethren to meet regularly twice each Lord's Day for service, which services are conducted by them in turn, and consist chiefly in prayer meetings. You will, with us, consider this as an acquisition, if you remember that Leipzig is a town in the kingdom of Saxony, where such meetings are

considered as "conventicles," and prohibited by imprisonment for three years. From time to time I visit these brethren and give them a Sabbath, preaching the word. That the meetings, when the police should find us out, may not appear as "conventicles" (secret meetings), we let them be public, inviting friends and strangers to them. The Lord helping us we shall go on in this way till any mightier power, "given from above," should make an end of it, which only would bring our case under consideration and into notice. It is a strange feeling, whilst standing there and preaching, to expect each moment the police, with the view of finding our vestry in a dark prison.

Whilst speaking of prisons, let me mention how also the Lord Jesus is in such, and there does "signs and wonders." Several years ago I sent a number of tracts into the large prison which is here in Halle; some time after I heard of a prisoner of the name of Netzband who had found the Lord Jesus. In consequence of the good behaviour he then manifested he got in various respects a preference, and after another year he was dismissed, though his time was far from being ended. But as often as any of the prisoners came in to be released, which they do very often, or induced the clergy of the prison to speak or write for them to be dismissed before their time, they got the answer, "Ye have not become better yet, and therefore it can't be;" to which they generally replied, "But there is one (Mr. N.) who has become better and repented, why do you not let *him* go?" So they dismissed him as an example for others. This same Mr. Netzband is at present a Bible colporteur of the great British and Foreign Bible Society. Only a week ago I had him for a short time in my house, giving him board and lodging (of course gratis), whilst he went about in the town selling Bibles and Testaments. I just did this to support the Bible distribution and to have some intercourse with him. He appears to be a true and faithful servant of the Lord; though he is at present still a member of the State Church, he is fully convinced of the truth regarding Baptism, and attends all our meetings.

In *Altenburg* I was again on Lord's Day, Sept. 24th, when the quarterly conference of our brethren in the kingdom of Saxony took place. We are happy to have at the frontier such a place where we are safe in meeting, and at such conferences we generally see nearly all the members together, who mostly are dispersed and standing alone like the proselytes among the Gentiles. This day was a Sunday indeed to all of us. After the prayer meeting, early in the morning, the service took place, when I spoke of the happy lot of the righteous. (Psalm xcii. 12—15.) In the afternoon meeting I proclaimed "the unsearchable riches of Christ," and in a church meeting afterwards we had the joy to receive again into fellowship a returned backslider, who with tears confessed his sins. The celebration of the Lord's supper was the crown of our feast. The next day, when each one went his way again rejoicing, I had a crowded meeting in the evening in the tunnel of the Senate-house, which, as large as it is, was far too small to contain all who desired admittance. I had to speak, as if it were for the last time, to be heard even outside on the market-place. May the Lord bless his word according to his promise.

Speaking of church conferences, I would mention that our church at Halle, in the province of Saxony, has the same manner of holding such, because its members are scattered over a great district—the whole province. On Lord's Day, Oct. 1st, the quarterly conference of this church took place in Halle. On this occasion, I, for my part, had the pleasure to see no less than some forty happy guests at my table. Early on the Sabbath morning we enjoyed the Lord's blessing in a prayer meeting, after which the first service took place, in which the Lord granted me grace and heart to speak on "the communion of the saints." (Acts ii. 42.) In a church meeting in the afternoon we had the pleasure to hear from a youth what the Lord Jesus had done for him in redeeming and

converting him; but having not yet quite clear ideas about baptism, by expecting too much from it, he was not received yet. We have several such who are standing near. May the Lord help them further. After the afternoon service we sat down at the Lord's table, where we were fully permitted to "take" and to "receive," to "eat" and to "drink," not only rich blessings, but the Lord himself. This celebration was followed by a love-feast, which lasted till midnight. During it I gave, as usual, to the members from abroad, especially to the various stations, the certain dates when I (D.V.) intend to visit the one and the other, and to preach in their neighbourhood. This saves time and enables them to prepare and announce the meetings in each place. Prayer, singing, speeches, and mutual intercourse afterwards took place in turn, and cheered everyone to "run with patience the course that is set before us." It is almost impossible to describe the rich blessings with which the Lord crowned this conference; we had been not only permitted to "kiss the Son," but have been kissed by him, the highest blessing we can think of.

The same Lord who thus showeth mercy, and even above asking and understanding, also executeth judgment, and makes us to behold both "the goodness and the severity of God." A striking instance of severity occurred here only a few weeks ago. One of our brethren, of the name of Arnds, being a boatman on the river Elbe, had since the time of his conversion ceased to go along with the vessel on the Lord's Day, but his old father, an unbeliever, being angry at this, commanded him to go on the Lord's Day too, but in vain; and fearing to lose by that the old man went himself on board, whilst, because of his age, he had sometime since given it up, and generally did stay at home. The first Sunday on the water he was at the steerage, when the vessel was drawn aside, and the steerage broke his leg and crushed him to such an extent that ere another Sabbath dawned he stood before the judgment-seat of him who is the Lord of the Sabbath.

In the middle of September I made a tour along the frontier of the kingdom, and held meetings in various places; in Wehlitz, for instance, I had in the dancing-hall there a crowded gathering of Prussians and Saxons, when my text was, "Seest thou this woman?" We contemplated I. The *woman*, and saw, 1, that she was a sinner; 2, her repentance; 3, her humility; 4, her love. II. *Jesus*, and we saw, 1, how he permitted the sinner to draw near to him (v. 38); 2, how he turned to the sinner (v. 44); 3, forgave her (v. 48); 4, justified her (v. 47); 5, imparted peace (v. 50). III. The *questions* of the text, "Seest thou this woman?" and doest thou see in her, 1, what true repentance is? 2, the greatness of Christ's love; 3, how Jesus receives the greatest sinner; 4, how you should come to Jesus; and, 5, how you should love him. In the next place (village) I went to, I preached on "Jesus and the Pharisee." (Luke vii. 36.) We beheld, I. The *Pharisee*, as a specimen of the self-righteous, and observed concerning him (with the necessary applications), 1, that he thought a great deal of himself; 2, he had a very defective knowledge of Jesus; 3, he was not sincere; 4, he observed only the outward forms ("Master"); 5, he was easily offended. II. *Jesus*, and we remarked, 1, that he went even to the Pharisees (his enemies); 2, he had something to tell him; 3, he knew his heart; 4, he pointed the Pharisee to the sinner-woman, and recommended to him her repentance and works of *love*.

I have spoken only of some engagements, and I will simply mention the rest. When at home I conducted the regular services, taught the school, made visits, attended to literary labours, etc. The pamphlet "On Religious Liberty" is now published and spread already in large numbers. May the Lord's blessing and power attend it to the pulling down of the strongholds of spiritual despotism.

With this I conclude, desiring to praise the Lord for all the strength and grace he granted. May He be with us in future, and grant us all

tears for sowing and joy in reaping.

With the heartiest salutations to all our fellow sowers,

I am, yours and theirs,
In the best of bonds,
MORITZ GEISSLER.

Halle, 10th October, 1865.

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INDEX.

PAGE

A Word to Our Readers 265
"Abide with us" 245
Agency of the Holy Spirit, On the Scriptural Means of Securing the 97
Baptism Plainly Revealed 169
Being Born Again of the Spirit 100
Christian Principle and Worldly Policy 223
Claptrap Preacher, The 237
Contented Christians 273
Dead and Alive 193
Diversity of Views respecting Baptism 17
Duty of Believers to Give, according to their Ability, to the Cause of Christ 198
Earnest Suppliant, The 176
Ebenezer; or, Help Hitherto 1
Ecclesiastical Latitudinarianism 121
Every Christian a Priest 118
Falling Leaf, The 241
Glory to be Revealed, The 9
Grieving the Spirit 196
Is it Honest? 25
"I Cannot Tell: God Knoweth" 73
Jesus Washing his Disciples' Feet 171
Joy of Harvest, The 221
Justification 85
Lay Agency, On the Employment of 49
Led by the Right Way 147
Love of Christ, The 153
Necessity of More Devotedness in the Work of Sabbath School Instruction 130
Nervous Conscience, A 250
Old Sifter, The 151
Our Safeguards Against the Return of Popery to Supreme Civil Power 36
Our Protestant Nonconformity 37, 86
Paul's Trust and Persuasion 58
Pope's, The, Last Encyclical Letter..... 102
Preacher Comforted, The 101
Profession and Possession 172
Religious Declension. Nos. 1 and 2 ..217, 267
Sabbath Hours at Home 246
Sacrifice—Does it Change the Divine Mind? 5
——Its General Design..... 30
——Legal Sin Offering, &c..... 55
——The Great Atonement 77
Soul Prosperity 145
Thoughts of Men, The 34
Thoughts of God, The 84
Twofold Denial, A..... 128
Unbelief and its Antidotes 3
Unfortunate Dilemma, An 238
Washing of Jesus, The 196
"Why Baptizest Thou?"..... 248

Baptisms, 22, 70, 94, 117, 144, 191, 216, 239
Baptist Evangelical Society 70, 94, 117, 142
——, Receipts for, 24, 72, 118, 191, 216, 240, 282
—— Tract Society 94, 139, 214
——, Receipts for ..22, 48, 71, 95, 120, 167, 191, 216, 239, 263, 281
—— Missionary Society..... 261
—— Union 94, 260
—— Sunday School Union 166

PAGE

Correspondence:—
Clerical Titles 155, 179
——, Primitive Christianity, and the Lord's Supper 206
Coleraine Baptist Church, 107, 132, 154, 204, 225
Discretionary Ordinances 207
Emigration 133
Occasional Communion with Strict Baptist Churches 273
Presbytery 12
Primitive Christianity 180
"Primitive Church Magazine" 252
Spurgeon, Mr., and the Plymouth Brethren 108
Support of Missionary Pastors 39
The Lord's Supper..... 181
The Name Christian and the Lord's Supper 225
Trust Deeds..... 107

Deaths 22, 48, 71, 117, 239

Editorial Postscript 144, 216

Intelligence:—
Foreign—Africa, Grahamstown 66, 139
America 115, 213
——, British 237
——, ——, Canada West 257
American Bible Union 92
Belize, Honduras..... 93
Ceylon 186, 236
Denmark 18, 64, 112
German Baptist Mission 20
Hungary..... 161
India, Madras 19
Melbourne, Australia..... 250
Saxony, 44, 114, 137, 183, 234, 278
Metropolitan—Baptist Itinerant Association 117, 215
Baptist Library, Took's Court..... 69
Gospel Oak Fields Baptist Church 164
Little Wild-street 190
Protest of London Pastors' Conference 261
Sayings and Doings of Roman Catholics ... 92
Strict Baptist Mission .. 186
Wilderness Row, Zion Chapel 115, 162, 263
Provincial—Accrington, Barnes-street 70
——, Blackburn-road 189
Association, North Western 165
——, Suffolk and Norfolk 188
Bacup, Irwell Terrace 167
——, Ebenezer 190
——, Zion 190, 215
Bexley Heath 239
Borough Green 215
Bramley, near Leeds..... 48

PAGE
Provincial—Club Moor, near Liverpool 215
Deala, near Bacup 216
Golcar, near Huddersfield 116
Goodshaw, Lancashire 167
Hill Cliff, Cheshire 117
Huncoat, near Accrington 167
Lumb, Rossendale 48, 190
Middlesborough-on-Tees .. 70
Milligate, near Bacup 216
New Mill, Tring 165
Ogden, near Rochdale 48
Ouston, Norley 47, 189, 190
Quarmby, near Huddersfield 47
Rochdale, Drake-street .. 46
Stanningly, near Leeds 164
Waterbarn, Lancashire, 143, 165, 190
Scotch—Aberchirder, Banffshire....70, 189
Lerwick Chapel Case....21, 68, 167
Lismore Chapel Case 22
Wick, Caithness..... 116

MARRIAGES 191, 239

OBITUARIES :—
Bowser, Mr. William 104
Crumpton, Mr. B., of Shrewsbury 96
Foster, Rev. J., of Farsley..... 61
Keighley, Mrs. H., of Farsley 10
Robson, Mr. W., of Aylsham 178

PAGE FOR THE YOUNG :—
A Harp in Heaven..... 254
Clara's Birthday..... 274
Consider the Lilies 230
Dark Valley, The 182
Do Animals Reason? 255
Face in the Glass, The 254
"God will bring us safely home"..... 13
Good and Bad Apples 109
How to be Saved 14
How to Begin 229
How to Honour a Mother 209
How Two Rules Worked..... 156
"Knock, and it shall be opened"..... 183
Little by Little 88
Paying Off 63
Way to Jesus, The..... 109
White Beans, The 134
What One Black-headed Worm Did.... 87

POETRY :—
A Scripture Poem 62
Be Just and Fear Not 108
Chastisement 13
Christ a Lovely Friend..... 134
God is Good..... 252
Here is my heart 155
Per Pacem ad Lucem 208
Strength in Weakness 209
Sweet Jesus..... 181
The Manchester Musical Festival in 1836 (Lines by the late Rev. J. Harbottle) 228
To a Saint at Home 40

REVIEWS :—
A Cyclopædia of Illustrations of Moral and Religious Truths, &c. By John Bate 278
Band of Christian Graces, A. By the Rev. J. P. Thompson, D.D. 276
Baptist Handbook for 1865..... 42
Baptists: Their Existence a Present Necessity, &c. By Joseph Angus, D.D. 219
Broadmead Records, The. Bunyan Library. Vol. 14 215
Debate in the House of Lords on the Power of Convocation, &c. 40
Handbook on Christian Baptism. By R. Ingham 110
Handbook on Christian Baptism. By R. Ingham. Abridged. 42
Handbook of the English Tongue. By Joseph Angus, M.A., D.D. 276
Handbook of English Literature, The. By Joseph Angus, M.A., D.D. 276
Higher Ministry of Nature, The 233
Impending Woes of Europe, The 111
Logic of Life and Death, The..... 255
London Quarterly Review. No. 49.... 250
Lyra Americana 276
Memoirs of Henrietta Caracciolo, Ex-Benedictine Nun 41
Memoirs of the Rev. John Pyer 110
New Testament, The. American Bible Union 186
Nichol's Commentaries of the Puritan Period. Vol. 1 to 4. .....90, 156, 231
Nichol's Puritan Divines, viz.:—
——— Charnock's Complete Works. Vols. 3 and 4. .....210, 232
——— Clarkson's Works. Vol. 2.... 88
——— Goodwin's Works. Vol. 9.... 136
Notes on Algeria. By T. Brassey 15
Parable or Divine Poesy. Part I..... 42
Paton's Review of Renan's "Vie de Jesus" 14
Sermons by Henry Ward Beecher. Vol. I. 15
Spiritualism and other Signs. By E. S. 233
Unitarian Apostacy, &c. 15
Unobtrusive Piety. Memoir of Mrs. Mary Oliver. By her Husband..... 256
Words of Wisdom for the Sons of Toil. By G. W. Conder 255
BRIEF NOTICES....16, 42, 111, 160, 234, 256